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Catholicism and Shinto in Japan

The History and Conflict of Catholicism and Shintoism in Japan and their Status Past and Present

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Angelus Aschoff, O.F.M.

Volume 4, Number 3

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Catholicism and Shinto in Japan

THE HISTORY AND CONFLICT OF CATHOLICISM AND SHINTOISM IN JAPAN AND THEIR STATUS PAST AND PRESENT

By

ANGELUS ASCHOFF, O.F.M.

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1.
Introduction

A census of Catholics taken in 1940 gives the number of 118,000 Catholics for the Japanese home country, which has a population of about 70 million.

This surprisingly small number of Catholics, after so many years of missionary labors, makes it clear that Japan is one of the most difficult mission fields in the world. It raises quite naturally the question: what is the reason for this small percentage of Catholics in Japan? What are the specific difficulties our missionaries have encountered there in the past and are encountering today?

Merely to point out that Christianity is a Western religion and as such foreign to the Japanese soul, is not the right answer. For, Buddhism was introduced from China and was for several centuries thought of as an alien element in Japan; and yet, it became most influential in Japan's culture development. The moral philosophy of Confucianism also came from a foreign country, and yet it was instrumental in developing Japanese concepts of morality.

Why did Buddhism and Confucianism succeed so splendidly, and why has Catholicism apparently met failure?

The following pages will be a review of Japan's religious past, non-Christian as well as Christian, and an attempt from the historical point of view to give the answer to this question.

2.
Japan Before The First Missionaries

Development of Shinto

The ancient Japanese were an agricultural people. Their primitive religious ideas, derived from their surroundings, constituted a kind of untutored pantheism, which was founded upon the vague and unformulated conception of the universe as composed of myriads of sentient beings. It developed into a nature worship of which the mainspring was appreciation and admiration rather than fear. This sentiment caused the early Japanese to ascribe divinity not only to the powerful and awe inspiring, as the sun, the moon, the tempest, but also to the lovely and pleasant, such as the rocks and streams, trees and flowers.

Nature worship is but one of the two factors from which the early religious concepts of the Japanese have developed, the other being community or clan sentiment. Under the influence of Confucian ethical philosophy the latter found its clearest formulation in the veneration of those ancestors from whom the community claimed descent. It was merely a step further that these ancestors were made local or national deities.

From these two component elements, namely, nature and ancestor worship, there developed what in later times came to be known as "Shinto," or "The Way of the Gods." This word "Shinto" was coined and applied to the indigenous system of religious thought when Chinese influence was strong in Japan in order to distinguish it from Buddhism and other religions. It has been derived from the Chinese compound "Shen-tao" meaning the "Way" or doctrine or religion of the gods or spirits.

Whom the early Japanese meant when they spoke of spirits and gods is revealed by a brief study of their religious thought before it came under Chinese influence. The word for "god" or spirit in ancient Japanese is *kami* which literally means "superior"; it

might also be translated as "wonderful" or "sacred." In general it conveyed the idea of something that had the qualities of both good and evil. Thus any object that evoked a thrill of emotion, whether affectionate or awe inspiring, and appealed to the sense of mystery, was regarded as *kami* and accorded due respect.

The more prominent part in this primitive religion seems to have been taken by ancestor worship. In the earliest times, when clans were virtually independent, it was the duty of the chieftain to worship the clan god from whom the community claimed descent. There was practically no distinction between ruler and high priest. The ordinary religious acts consisted in visiting the shrine of the local deity, to offer up sacrifices, to implore his help or to give thanks for favors received. Also private pilgrimages to places dedicated to the local or national deity seem to have been part of early Japanese religious practices.

From among the various clans in central Japan the Yamato also gradually emerged as the most powerful. The Yamato people worshipped as their highest deity the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-Omikami, from whom they claimed direct descent through the line of their ruler.

By the 4th century A.D. this clan had extended its control over western and central Japan. Incidentally, it had also impressed its own religious ideas upon those clans over whom control had been established. This had far-reaching implications. It meant that the clan deity of the Yamato people was more powerful than other local deities, and had quite naturally to be acknowledged as such; it meant, furthermore, submission to the ruler of the Yamato people and recognition of what he claimed to be, namely, a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess, commissioned by her to rule Japan and the world. It was the first step in establishing the long line of "divine" emperors of Japan.

The Nihongi and Kojiki

When at the beginning of the 8th century the rulers of other clans were in a position to challenge their supremacy, the Yamato rulers, anxious to strengthen or justify their claims, ordered Chinese-trained historiographers to compile the "national history," which they entitled *Kojiki* or "Record of Ancient Affairs"

and *Nihongi* or "History of Japan."[1] What these writers compiled was not actual history; it was rather a tendentious work in which myth, legend and actual history were so selected as to enhance the prestige of the Yamato ruler.

What are the essential ideas of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* which were to secure prestige for the dynastic family?

According to the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi,* Izanagi and Izanami are the divine parents of the Japanese islands, and the ancestors of the Japanese people. The Sun Goddess Amaterasu-Omikami, the clan deity of Yamato, is the illustrious daughter of Izanagi and Izanami, who ruled over the plain of Heaven. She sent her grandson Jimmu Tenno to rule Japan, and it is from him that the emperors and, through the Imperial family, the Japanese people are descended.

This myth of the Yamato clan served its purpose excellently. According to it, all of Japan belonged to the divine family; at its core was an ancestralism which proclaimed the ruler of Yamato the living god, the Sun Goddess incarnate, whose position could not be challenged because of his divine prerogatives, and to whom all owed obedience and submission.

The compilation of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* testifies strongly to influence from China. At the time when these chronicles were written down, Chinese learning was noticeable in all branches of Japan's national life. Even the emperors took an active part in introducing and spreading Chinese civilization in Japan by sending out cultural missions to China inviting Chinese masters to come to Japan.

Confucianism and Buddhism

Two elements of Chinese culture that were brought to the Japanese islands are particularly noteworthy: Confucianism and Buddhism. They are remarkable because they supplemented the indigenous system of religious ideas.

The contribution of Confucianism to the formation of Japanese civilization consisted in its moral philosophy. Thus it made good for the greatest defect of indigenous Shinto which almost entirely

1. The *Kojiki* was completed in 712 A.D., the *Nihongi* in 720 A.D.

lacked moral precepts. According to Confucian philosophy, filial piety to parents and ancestors is what keeps human society in order, and for this reason it is valued as the highest of all virtues.

This idea, taken from the classical books of Chinese Confucian-sim, suffered a remarkable modification when it was introduced into Japan. The Japanese grasped the full meaning and importance of filial piety for ordering human society; but this virtue was given the first place in relation to the Imperial Throne. It came to mean one's absolute loyalty to the emperor, overshadowing to a great extent the original Chinese meaning of loyalty to one's parents and ancestors.

This example makes it quite understandable why Confucianism succeeded in becoming an integral part of Japanese national life: it easily amalgamated with Shinto and served to strengthen the divine authority of the emperor. One might say it is exclusively due to this fact that Confucianism became an integral part of Japanese national life.

With the introduction of Chinese learning, Buddhism also entered Japan. It was officially introduced in 552 A.D. In order to mark the distinction between the native system of religious ideas and those coming in from China, the former was called "Shinto," The Way of the Gods, and the latter "Butsudo," The Way or Religion of Buddha.

What was the fate of Buddhism in Japan? For 250 years it was welcomed by some, as for instance by Shotoku Taishi (593-621), and at the same time bitterly opposed by adherents of Shinto. But this rivalry ended in the 8th century with the famous compromise as formulated by Gyogi (670-749), the patriarch of the Hosso sect of Japanese Buddhism, and later systematized by Kobo Daishi (774-835), the founder of the Shingon sect. Emerging from the shrine of the Sun Goddess at Ise after a week's seclusion, Gyogi announced that all the deities of the Shinto pantheon were but manifestations of the same Buddha who appeared—so he asserted—as a *kami* to the Shintoists, as a sage to the Confucianists, and as a Buddha to the Buddhists. With this principle established it was a fairly simple matter for Kobo

Daishi to set up a catalogue of correspondence between the *kamis* of Shinto and the gods of Buddhism, between Shinto and Buddhist festivals and liturgies.

Japanese Buddhism

Shinto and Buddhism not only merged into one another and syncretized; Buddhism itself even underwent quite a change. Originally "other-worldly," it had been made by the practical minded Chinese to a great extent "this-worldly"; and it became still more so when it was introduced into Japan. Here it entered into close union with the old Shinto nature worship. Shinto believes in the divine, but the divine is wholly what it finds in the natural order of things, looking upon this world as essentially good. The islands of Japan are the abode of the gods, and if there could be a more ideal world of which the Buddhists talked, it could be simply a glorification of the mountains and valleys, the rivers and rocks, the clouds and sunsets which make Japan so beautiful.

Japanese Buddhism went a step further in giving the originally other-worldly Buddhism a this-worldly setting and interpretation. In some of its branches it secularized to such an extent that it blotted out the distinction between the monk and the laymen; for instance, the Shin sect bade its priests to marry and rear families.

The "this-worldly" tendency as displayed in Japanese Buddhism is naturally in open contradiction to its original ideals, which had always stood for cutting oneself off from all earthly entanglements and living wholly in the transcendental world. Instead of scorning the world or being indifferent to it, as is the characteristic attitude of Indian philosophy and religion, Japanese Buddhism feared the scorn of the world and adapted itself to whatever was expected of it. It even formed a close alliance with the Japanese state, with the result that it was often little more than an instrument of the state.

We are now in a position to answer the question raised at the introduction: why did Confucianism and Buddhism in spite of their foreign origin and character succeed in gaining a strong hold in Japan, whereas Catholicism failed. Obviously, Confu-

cianism as well as Buddhism yielded to the indigenous system of religious ideas to such an extent that they changed their original character, or, better, they were made subservient to them. It is largely, not to say exclusively, due to this fact that they succeeded in becoming an integral part of Japan's cultural life.

This syncretism of Confucianism and Buddhism with Shinto also sheds light on these systems as compared to Catholicism. Both Confucianism and Buddhism could modify themselves so extensively, because they do not have that distinctive characteristic which marks off Catholicism from all other religious systems, and which constitutes its universally obliging character, namely, historical and metaphysical truth. Catholicism also adapts itself to the racial and national characteristics of the various nations; but it can never admit of modification in essential matters.

With the characterization of Catholicism as the absolute truth, we touch the fundamental of all conflicting issues between Catholicism and Shinto. The former of these two rests not only upon untangible metaphysics, but on concrete historical events as well, as for instance, the life and resurrection of Christ. The latter, Shinto, rests upon myths and legends, which from the standpoint of truth have no more value than our fairy tales. From the fact that the ancient legends have been taken for concrete realities, all the various issues between the two ideologies arise.

So for instance, Catholicism can from its very essence never agree to the Shinto doctrine of the divinity of the emperor, which is the heart of Shinto; first, because the Japanese emperor is evidently no more divine and no less human than any other man; secondly, because his claim to divine nature and divine authority is squarely opposed to the First Commandment. The other doctrine of the divine origin and inherent sacredness of the Japanese home country and the subsequent demand of loyalty and service to this country as the final meaning of life, cannot be agreed to either; first, because it is not true, and secondly, because love of the fatherland and loyalty to it is, according to Catholic teaching, like everything in this world, merely a means by which we endeavor to reach our eternal destiny in God; it is not the end itself as Shinto takes it.

The Rise of the Shoguns

These, then, are briefly the points of clash between Catholicism and Shinto. We will study in a moment the historical development of this clash. But before dealing with it in detail, I will give a brief summary of the events which gave Japan those political institutions and social characteristics which our first missionaries encountered.

In the foregoing I have outlined the development of Japan up to the 8th and 9th century A.D., the time when Confucianism and Buddhism had thoroughly syncretized with Shinto. The characteristic feature of this period of Japanese history was the rule of the country by the "divine" emperor, of which Shinto ideology was the backbone. Another symptomatic feature of this period was the prevalence and seemingly irresistible gain of Buddhism by which native Shinto was almost entirely obscured. Meanwhile, it seemed that the Imperial court and Shinto were so intimately bound up with each other that the decline of the one meant also the decline of the other, a fact which became apparent during the next few centuries.

From among the various families that rose to power, the House of Fujiwara was the first to gain dominance over the emperor. It was the various representatives of this house who, being placed in the highest offices of state, Kwampaku or Civilian Dictator (held by the Fujiwara from 886-1185 A.D.), usurped practically all power, and made the emperor a mere puppet, removable at their will.

Though in the 12th century the Fujiwara regime collapsed and the Taira came to wield dominant power, this change did not bring about any betterment of Imperial prestige; it rather deteriorated still further, leaving the divine emperor even without a substantial income.

Fifty years later the position of the Taira was successfully challenged by the rival house of Minamoto. The long struggle between these two houses came to an end in the battle of Danoura in 1185 A.D., when the Taira were overthrown and the Minamoto acceeded to power.

The Imperial court was at the lowest ebb of its fortunes under

the Shoguns of the Ashikaga family, whose rule began in 1338 and lasted until about 1500. This period was marked by a succession of civil conflicts. Ashikaga Takauji (1338-1358), the first of the line, after failing to gain possession of the occupant of the Throne, set up another person as emperor and obtained from him the appointment as Shogun. For half a century there were two lines of rival emperors, one was supported by the Ashikaga family remaining at Kyoto, while the other dwelt in the mountains of Yamato. Dissensions broke out afterwards in the Ashikaga family itself. A bitter civil war resulted, which lasted for a hundred years (1467-1567). Because of it the central provinces of Japan were greatly devastated and impoverished.

During the centuries in which the Shoguns reigned, Japan's political and social organization gradually took those forms as were encountered by the first Catholic missionaries in the 16th century.

One of the characteristics of the Japan as formed by the Shoguns was the strange position of the emperor. Stripped of all actual power and reduced to the status of mere figurehead and symbol of divinity, he lived in seclusion at Kyoto, surrounded by a phantom court and an idle hierarchy and entirely at the mercy of the military magnates, who enthroned and deposed him at will.

Classes of Japanese Society

In spite of this imperial weakness each one of the powerful militarists, after overcoming a rival, sought from the emperor investiture and appointment as "Shogun," a title which may be rendered by "Generalissimo." In theory it was the commission to rule the country in the name of the emperor; but in reality it came to mean full political power. Next to the Shogun were the "Daimyos," or Great Feudal Lords, who in turn were assisted by the "Samurai," or Military Nobles.

This class of higher and lower nobility as Shogun, Daimyo and Samurai, dominated the great majority of the Japanese people, whose social standing was very low. The ordinary people were without personal rights, excluded from access to any public office, and even denied proper education. They were divided into three

classes: farmers, merchants and artisans. A fourth class might be added, which is ordinarily omitted as of no significance, namely, the Eta, or Hinin; it consisted of people who performed such jobs as were regarded as unclean, as for instance, that of butchers and undertakers.

These are, in brief, the political and social conditions as the first missionaries found them. To complete the picture a word should be said about some new developments in Shinto and Buddhism.

Jodo and Zen

Chief and most influential among the new Buddhist sects of the 11th and 12th centuries were the Jodo or "Pure Land" sect and the Zen sect. The former emphasized the burden and worthlessness of life and the glories of Buddhist heaven after death. In Zen rigorous physical training was stressed; life with its manifold troubles must be faced with courage; ambition, pleasure and fame all are vain; it is only through death that life may renew itself, and therefore the hope for something better than this life can be fulfilled only through death.

Moreover, Shinto, though almost obscured entirely by Buddhism, had its development. The most influential of its schools in the early centuries of the Shogun domination was Yoshida Shinto. It attempted to offset Buddhism with the declaration that not the Buddhist deities but the gods of Shinto were the original manifestations of universal life, and that the Buddhist gods were merely manifestations of the Shinto gods. This doctrine of Yoshida Shinto which was propounded by Chicafusa (1293-1354) reversed the syncretic teaching of Buddhism as it had been pronounced 500 years before by Kobo Daishi. Proceeding from this basic premise, it stated further that because the life of the universe has been revealed through the creative activities of the Shinto gods, Japan is the divine country and her emperor, directly descended from the Sun Goddess, is a god incarnate.

From the idea of Jodo, "to live is to die," and that of Zen, "to die is to live," combined with the Shinto conception of

reverence for the divine emperor and the Confucian concept of absolute obedience to superior authority, there gradually evolved a new morality which was marked by supreme courage on the battlefield, complete and undying fidelity to leaders, self-sacrifice to a cause, and an utter disregard for death. Though this attitude became mainly the code of behavior for the Samurai class, it may well have affected also other social strata and explain some of the fervour and enthusiasm in the heroic marytrdom of the Japanese Christians in the 17th century.

The Deterioration of Buddhism

Besides these brighter sides of spiritual development before the coming of the missionaries to Japan, there appeared also a rather dark aspect in Buddhism. During the Ashikaga period (1338-1567) Buddhism became so secularized that its religious character was greatly obscured. Buddhist monasteries became trade enterprises and depots for merchandise. But worst of all, the older sects, particularly that of Mt. Hiei, had taken on a military character, played with politics, and even sent their military bands into the capital to enforce their wishes. Shortly before the arrival of St. Francis Xavier the capital had been laid waste by these Buddhist militant bands. No wonder that the government had no great liking for them at that time.

This then was Japan as our missionaries found it in the middle of the 16th century: the emperor, weak and powerless, living in seclusion at Kyoto; the government decentralized, exercised by a feudal aristocracy which was headed by the Shogun; the country ravaged and devastated by the great civil war; Buddhism greatly secularized; and Shinto, though obscured by Buddhism, still a living force to be reckoned with.

It was in a way just the right time for our missionaries to come in. At no other moment of its history was Japan so open for them than at the time when Francis Xavier entered it.

3.

Accommodation versus Syncretism

St. Francis Xavier

While Japan was engaged in fierce strife, Columbus, Vasco de Gama and other explorers were making their great discoveries. Portuguese merchants, taking advantage of the new routes, reached Japan in 1539, the first Europeans ever to enter that country. In the wake of the merchant came the missionary. Under the guidance of Paul Yashiro, a Japanese fugitive to India and convert to Catholicism, St. Francis Xavier and other members of his Order arrived in Satsuma in 1549.

Xavier's idea of winning the central government, whether emperor or Shogun, to his side proved an illusion; but he did succeed in securing the favor of the two feudal lords of Yamaguchi and Bungo. While the missionaries could carry on their activities in the former only for a short time, the latter became the first stronghold of the Jesuit missions. During a stay of twenty-seven months, Xavier not only visited the great city Myiako and other important places, but also won a number of converts from among the Samurai, Buddhist monks, and the common people, and was able to leave behind him an able and zealous missionary, Cosme de Torres. It was certainly a grand start of Catholicism in Japan.

After a few years other Jesuit Fathers arrived. Christian communities grew in number. Public religious instruction and education were strengthened by works of charity, for besides churches, schools and hospitals were established. There were many difficulties, and at times even local persecutions with banishment of missionaries and Christians. But in general, the progress was quite steady, despite the opposition of Buddhist sects and occasional setbacks. From 1560 the mission field was extended to embrace Myiako and the central provinces, where

resistance was no less fierce than in the west. But the missionaries were rewarded by the conversion of some nobles; among these was the Takayama family, who remained faithful to their new religion throughout half a century of hardships and vicissitudes up to their banishment in Manila in 1614.[2]

When Father Vilela started his mission work in Myiako, the conditions in this capital were at their worst. The city had been devastated by wars, fires and floods, and the people were suffering from famine, pestilence and brigandage. In addition, the missionaries suffered persecution and all kinds of obstruction; but these evils gave opportunities for winning converts by means of spiritual assistance to bewildered souls and by way of corporal works of mercy.

Nobunaga and the Christians

In 1569 the powerful Odo Nobunaga entered the capital at the head of a strong army and put an end to the anarchic confusion that was reigning there. This was of immense help to the cause of Christianity, for he ever favored the missionaries and protected their converts. Four years later he supplanted the old regime of the Ashikaga family and established his firm rule in the central provinces of Japan. This was a blessing for the young Christian communities, and the ten years of his rule (1571-1582) were a period of progress for the missions. At the end of that period there were eighty Jesuit missionaries working in twenty stations and several educational centers, with 200 churches to serve the 150,000 converts. Evidently, their activities were rewarded with a very remarkable success.

What were the reasons that induced Nobunaga to patronize the missions? The real reasons are obscure because he never expressed any inclination to be regarded as a Christian. Desire for new importations from Portugal, for instance, ships and firearms, together with the vainglory of attracting foreigners to his court, certainly played a large role in his policy. But his career was too short to establish any commercial relations with the Portuguese.

2. The very interesting story of the Takayama family illustrates a happy union of the valor of a Japanese warrior and the fidelity of an ardent Catholic.

Another motive for patronizing the missions was his desire to give the Christians a fair chance. The *Saikoku Kirishitan Bateren Jitsu Roku* or *The True Record of the Christian Padres in Kiushu* gives an interesting account of Nobunaga's attitude towards Christianity. After giving a description of the appearance of the Jesuit Father Organtin, the account goes on to say:

> ". . . Nobunaga took counsel with his retainers as to whether he should allow Christianity to be preached or not. One of these strongly advised him not to do so, on the ground that there were already enough religions in the country. But Nobunaga replied that Buddhism had been introduced from abroad and had done good in the country and he, therefore, did not see why Christianity should not be granted a trial. Father Organtin was consequently allowed to erect a church and to send for others of his Order. . . .[3]

It was certainly not only the desire to give Christianity a chance that prompted Nobunaga to patronize the missions. There must have been a motive of greater force behind the action. And this was his personal dislike for Buddhism. He regarded the fighting monks of Mt. Hiei and of other militant Buddhist centers as a great menace to his ambitions and always worked to suppress them. One of the means to achieve his aims was to favor the Jesuit missionaries, whose success would help him to undermine the power of the Buddhist monks.

Towards the end of his career, however, it seems that Nobunaga changed his favorable attitude towards the Christians, most likely under the influence of the Buddhist ex-monk Yakuin, whose antagonism against Christianity had been roused by the rapid progress of the latter and by the imprudent actions on the part of some missionaries and converts in condemning Buddhist monks for their perversities and denouncing their religion as nihilism.

Another factor which most likely worked in Nobunaga's mind against the Christians was the great concern of the government

3. A translation of this passage is to be found in: J. H. Gubbins, "Review of the Introduction of Christianity into China and Japan." *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*. Vol. VI, pp. 11-12.

to insure loyalty from their subjects in accordance with the tradition of all Japanese history. Shinto and all that it stands for is nothing else than a political system colored with religion for the attainment of this end. Confucianism and Buddhism fitted in with this general principle and thus were regarded by the Japanese as "good religions"; but Catholicism with its insistence on the spiritual authority of the Pope, was perhaps misunderstood as demanding loyalty to some foreign power; and since Christians were the only religious group in Japan not placing Nobunaga's picture on the altars of their churches, the misinterpretation constantly gained ground. Thus Catholicism could not help being regarded as a religion "contrary to that of Japan" or as "an evil religion," as Nobunaga's successors termed it, that had to be eliminated in order to safeguard the state.

This explains a passage in the *Ibuki Mogusa* which says that Nobunaga once expressed to his counselors fear "that they (the missionaries) harbor the design of seizing the country," that he "consequently regretted exceedingly his (favorable) action with regard to Christianity, and that he set about thinking how he could root it out."[4] In spite of his suspicions, however, Nobunaga continued externally to favor Christianity and the missionaries, because too many of the nobility and of his own retainers were Christians, a fact which made it inadvisable to take any action against them for the time being.

These two items, antagonism from the Buddhist priesthood, or better from the Shinto-Buddhist ideology, and fear that Portugal might seize Japan with the help of missionaries and Christians, played their great role in the following decades of persecutions and led, as we will see later, to the extermination of Christianity.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi

Nobunaga was assassinated by one of his generals in 1586. Toyotomi Hideyoshi succeeded in seizing power and securing his position as successor to Nobunaga. In the missionary records he is also known as Taikosama.

Though Hideyoshi apparently favored the Christians at the

4. J. H. Gubbins, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

beginning of his rule, his initial attitude can easily be explained. Two of his most important generals, the governor of Osaka, and numerous officers of state and nobles of rank having embraced Christianity, he could not afford to offend them by taking a stand against Christianity. Furthermore, for his future campaigns he needed money, firearms and ships, all of which he hoped to get from the Portuguese. Missionary work and trade, however, were in those days so closely linked to each other that he could hardly take any action against the one without at the same time harming the other. Thus his best policy was to be lenient and friendly towards the Christians.

But in his heart Hideyoshi had entirely different ideas. He was noted for the reverence he had for the gods of Shinto and dreamed of carrying out the Sun Goddess's command to Jimmu Tenno to conquer and rule the whole world. He also revered the gods of Buddhism, and by no means did he share the animosity of Nobunaga against the Buddhist monks. Finally, the opportunity Nobunaga had given to Christianity seems to have revealed that the religion the missionaries were teaching would stand in the way of his future plans; in other words, he feared Catholicism would mean the allegiance of his subjects to a foreign power. Thus it is not surprising that Japanese say that Hideyoshi from the very beginning had been opposed to Christianity.

Hideyoshi's Edict

The ambitious tyrant threw off the mask he had been wearing as soon as he secured his position. On July 25, 1587 he suddenly issued the famous edict by which he forbade the Catholic religion and ordered all foreign missionaries to leave the country at once. The text of the edict reads as follows:

> Having heard from our faithful counselors that foreign religious teachers have come into our estates, where they preach a religion contrary to that of Japan, and that they had even the audacity to destroy temples dedicated to our *kami* (deities of Shinto) and Hotoke (gods of Buddhism): although this outrage

> merits the most extreme punishment, but wishing nevertheless to show them mercy, we order that pain of death they quit Japan within twenty days. During that space of time no harm nor hurt will be done to them, but at the expiration of that term we order that if any of them be found in our estates, they shall be seized and punished as the greatest criminals. As for the Portuguese merchants, we permit them to enter our ports, there to continue their accustomed trade, and to remain in our estates, provided our affairs need this; but we forbid them to bring any foreign religious teachers into the country, under the penalty of the confiscation of their ships and goods.[5]

This was a hard blow to the missionaries and Christians. It came entirely unexpected, since it was issued immediately after Father Coelho, Provincial Superior of the Jesuits, had been cordially received at Hideyoshi's camp, where the regent promised to give him land to build a seminary and assured him that he would protect the Catholic religion.

How did the missionaries and Christians react to Hideyoshi's edict? Father Coelho tried and succeeded in having the time for the departure of the missionaries extended from twenty days to six months. Very wisely, the latter refrained from all open exercise of their ministry. But several daimyos protected the Fathers from molestations and even encouraged and helped them to carry on their work secretly. So it happened that in spite of the prohibition against Catholicism there were still many converts, among whom were very notable persons, even from among the relatives of Hideyoshi himself.

As far as Hideyoshi's policy is concerned, the edict reveals clearly the regent's ideas in regard to Shinto-Buddhism and Christianity on the one hand, and the Portuguese merchants on the other. Shinto and Buddhism, as has been said previously, centered in their syncretized form in the Mikado cult, a religiously colored kind of loyalty and patriotism, without which, as some Japanese writers say, Japan would not be Japan. Cathol-

5. This translation has been taken from O. Cary, *A History of Christianity in Japan*. Vol. I, p. 106.

icism, of course, could not follow Shinto and Buddhism on this point. Not only that, it seemed to loosen the bond between ruler and subjects and even attaching the latter to a foreign power. Thus it was necessarily viewed by Hideyoshi as being "contrary to the law of Japan." In the final part of the edict the regent declared that Portuguese merchants might continue their accustomed trade "provided our affairs need this." Thus he made clear that he agreed to the presence of the foreign traders only in so far as they helped him to realize his ambitious plans, namely, the conquest of Korea, China and the Philippines. In one word, Hideyoshi's policy as outlined by the edict was one of promoting foreign trade while at the same time suppressing foreign religious missions. But, as has been said, trade and missionary activity were in those days so closely related to each other that the forced separation of the two proved futile in the long run. The later rulers who followed the policy of Hideyoshi were compelled to restrict foreign trade on account of religion and finally to put an end to both. This policy terminated in the national seclusion which was enforced by the Tokugawa rulers.

Thus we find Hideyoshi's edict the whole background of the terrible persecution which was to wipe out Catholicism: on the one hand, opposition from Shinto-Buddhism, and on the other, the very unfortunate connection between missionary work and the commercial interests of the Portuguese.

Conflict, Intrigue, Persecution

In the meantime new developments took place on the mission field. A few years before Hideyoshi's edict the first Franciscans arrived and joined in the labors of the Jesuits, who until then had been the only Catholic missionaries in Japan. The newcomers worked especially among the poor. Their example and life of sacrifice attracted also a good many from the nobility.

It is sad to read in the records of Japan's Catholic past that rivalry developed between the different Religious Orders, doing great harm to the common cause. It developed partly from nationalistic antagonisms, the Franciscans being mostly Spaniards, and the Jesuits being Portuguese, and partly from other

questions, like centralized control of the whole mission, and episcopal authority and succession. Still another issue involved was the Papal authorization of the Franciscans to share in the missionary labors of the Jesuits in Japan. However, though this rivalry did great harm to the common cause, it cannot be said that it actually provoked the persecution of 1597, nor that it had any actual influence on it, as the following will show.

In 1596 an unfortunate incident is said to have taken place which, if true, demonstrates the tragical connection that existed between mission work and commercial interests. In that year a Spanish ship was stranded at Tosa. When the local authorities of the province treated the crew badly, one of the Spaniards tried to intimidate them by boastfully recounting the power and territorial expansion of Spain, and the intention of his King to use the Christian missions as a wedge for the conquest of Japan. This report, it is said, was sufficient to convince Hideyoshi and his ministers of the ulterior purpose of the missions: that they were nothing but a tool of territorial aggrandizement such as had already been achieved elsewhere by Spain. The result was the capture and crucifixion of twenty-six missionaries and converts, most of whom were Franciscans. This martyrdom took place on February 5, 1597, in Nagasaki, and signalized the coming of a long series of persecutions and martyrdoms.

Hideyoshi died in 1598, after he had appointed his son Fideyori to be his successor. But Tokugawa Ieyasu disputed this appointment and succeeded after a short struggle in emerging supereme in power. Though Christians had taken part in the struggle against Ieyasu, the new leader seemed to favor the Christians, until he had overcome all opposition. As soon as he felt himself securely established, he at once gave evidence of the policy he intended to follow by issuing in 1600 a decree of expulsion against the missionaries. However, this decree seems to have been withdrawn shortly after its publication, for as he was desirous of securing for himself the profits of trade with foreigners who were of the same nationality and religion as the missionaries, he could hardly afford to continue this policy. It seems that he even desired to have missionaries come to Japan in order thereby to attract the merchants. In 1602 he sent an

embassy to the Philippines for the development of trade relations. After this, missionaries of various Orders flocked to Japan in great numbers. During the following years the Christians were left in peace. Their number increased rapidly and is said to have been close to 2,000,000. They were organized in pious fraternities, and the Christian cause was apparently never as strong as at this particular period.

But there was one great weakness: the converts were mostly from the lower strata of society and, therefore, in times of oppression they had no one to defend their cause before the ruling classes. This weakness the Christians were to feel when, after 1611, the Dutch and the English traders got a firm hold in Japan and did all in their power to prejudice the rulers of Japan against the Spaniards and Portuguese, whether missionaries or merchants, in order to secure for themselves the profits of trade. They made use of all kinds of treachery and intrigue, a favorite device being the forging of letters designed to excite the suspicions of Japanese rulers. An instance of this was a certain letter purporting to have been written by the Portuguese Bishop of Nagasaki to the Portuguese Viceroy of Goa. From this letter it appeared that the Spaniards and Portuguese had formulated a plan not only to convert the Japanese to Christianity but under the cloak of religion to bring the whole country under Portuguese rule. Having first concealed the letter on board a Portuguese ship bound for Goa, they caused it to be discovered by the Japanese authorities, who, in consequence, quite naturally took action against the Christians. More examples of this kind could easily be adduced.

Not only Dutch and English traders, but also Christians who had apostatized joined in the acts of intrigue and treachery. There is at least one instance in which a renegade Christian reported to the state authority that the ultimate purpose of all missions was no other than to prepare for the final occupation of the country concerned. He pointed to the Philippines, Mexico and other countries of the southern seas, which Spain had conquered in this way. No doubt, such arguments did not fail to have their effect on Japanese authorities.

To this play of intrigue and treachery, whether by Dutch and English traders or apostate Christians, was added the constant hostility of the powerful Buddhist priesthood. Nobunaga, by his anti-Buddhist policy, had broken their power to such an extent that they never recovered fully from that blow. But Hideyoshi, as we have seen, did not share his attitude against Buddhism but kept on friendly terms with the priests. Ieyasu went a step further, openly advocating their cause; it is no surprise then that the Buddhist priests found in him a powerful ally against their rivals, the missionaries and the Christians.

Combined with all these factors that worked against Christianity was Ieyasu's own opposition to it. At the beginning of his rule Ieyasu had favored the missions only for commercial reasons. But now that he saw the Dutch and English opening new avenues of trade without apparent interest in propagating any form of religions, his attitude towards the Spaniards, Portuguese and the Christians changed completely.

Proclamation of 1614

The final result of all the anti-Christian tendencies was the proclamation of Ieyasu against Catholicism in the beginning of 1614. It reads in its most pertinent parts as follows:

> . . . Japan was from the commencement the country of the (Shinto)-gods. The unfathomableness of the Positive and Negative Principles [6] is called god, and who shall refuse reverence and honor to the essence of all that is holy and spiritual? Man owes his existence entirely to the workings of the Positive and Negative . . . and he is not independent of god for a single moment. . . .
>
> Japan is called the land of Buddha, and not without reason. It is written, "The power by which Buddha saves the world, resides in his perfect omniscence; whereby he makes happy all living beings, wherefore he makes manifest immeasurable divine power." This is a golden saying, a miraculous passage. (Shinto)

6. This refers to Confucian cosmology.

god and Buddha differ in name, but their essence is one, just as if the two halves of a tally be placed together. The priests and laymen of antiquity, by the divine aid, sailed over the ocean and visited the far-off land of China in search of the law of Buddha and the doctrine of the principles of benevolence;[7] unweariedly they bore hither the esoteric and exoteric books (of Buddhism). Since that time the doctrine has been handed down from teacher to teacher in unbroken succession, and the glory of the Buddhist Law has been far greater here than in other lands. This exemplifies the truth that "the Law of Buddha gradually travels eastwards."

But the Kirishitan band[8] have come to Japan, not only sending their merchant vessels to sell goods, but also to disseminate an evil law, to overthrow right doctrine, so that they may change the government of the country and obtain possession of the land. This is the germ of great disaster and must be crushed. Japan is the country of the (Shinto) gods and of Buddha; it honors the gods and reverses Buddha. The principles of benevolence and righteousness are held to be of prime importance, and the law of good and evil is so ascertained that if there be any offenders, they are liable to punishment according to the gravity of the crime. . . . If there be one suspected of crime, let the gods bear witness. . . . Criminals of every degree are detested by Buddha, (Shinto) gods, the trinity of precious ones, mankind, Heaven and all living things. The overflowings of accumulated wickedness shall not escape; whether by crucifixion or burning in the furnace, punishment shall be meted out, for this is the way of encouraging the good and chastising the evil. Though one may desire to keep down evil, it accumulates with ease; though one desire to advance in good, it is difficult to hold by; and thus a watch must be kept. It is so in the present life, and in the next not even all the

7. In other words, the Confucian doctrine.
8. Kirishitan is the 16th century Japanese word for "Christian."

> Buddhas, past, present, and to come, can save from the reproaches of the King of Hell, nor can the successive generations of our ancestors succour us. Fear and tremble!
>
> The faction of the Bateren[9] rebels against this dispensation; they disbelieve in the way of the gods, blaspheme the true law, violate right-doing, and injure the good. . . . There are truely the enemies of the (Shinto) gods and of Buddha. If this be not speedily prohibited, the safety of the state will assuredly be hereafter imperilled; and if those who are charged with ordering its affairs do not stop the evil, they will expose themselves to Heaven's rebuke.
>
> These must instantly be swept out, so that not an inch of soil remains to them in Japan on which to plant their feet, and if they refuse to obey this command they shall suffer the penalty. We have been blessed by the commission of Heaven to be the Lord in Japan, and we have wielded power over this realm for past years. Abroad we have manifested the perfection of the Five Cardinal Virtues, while at home we have returned to the doctrine of the Scriptures. For these reasons the country prospers, and the people enjoy peace. . . . Quickly cast out the evil Law (of Christianity) and spread our true Law more and more; for to cultivate the way of the gods (Shinto) and the Law of Buddha in spite of the degeneracy of these latter days is the mark of a good ruler. Let Heaven and the Four Seas (the whole world) hear this and obey.[10]

This edict was published on January 27, 1614, and was accompanied by a number of rules which were intended to guide the priests who were to secure the Buddhist or Shinto orthodoxy of their followers.

The text of the edict reveals that the fundamental reasons which induced Ieyasu to proscribe Christianity were just the

9. This is the 16th century Japanese rendering of the Portuguese word "Padre," meaning Catholic religious priest.

10. The translation of the edict of Ieyasu is to be found in J. H. Gubbins, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-48.

same as those of Hideyoshi: first, the conviction that Catholicism essentially stands in opposition to Buddhism and Shinto and what these ideologies stand for; and secondly, fear that the missionaries and Christians were nothing but tools for the territorial aggrandizement of Spain and Portugal.

What were the effects of the edict upon missionaries and Christians? On January 27, 1614, persecution broke out in its fullest fury. The daimyos were ordered to send to Nagasaki all missionaries living in their territories, to destroy all churches, and to force the Christians to give up their religion. In order to enforce the edict, the most ingenious tortures were put into practice. We hear of Christians being executed in a barbarous manner in sight of each other, of being hurled from tops of precipices, of being burned or buried alive, of being torn asunder by oxen, of being tied up in rice bags, which were then heaped up to form material for a bonfire. Not just a few Christians but thousands and thousands were thus tortured and killed.

Shimabara Revolt

In the face of these facts who can wonder at the Shimabara revolt in 1637, the tragical closing scene of Japanese Christianity? In the autumn of 1637, the converts of a district in Hizen, driven past endurance by the ferocity of the persecution, assembled to the number of 30,000 and, fortifying the castle of Shimabara, declared open defiance to the government. Troops were sent against them, and after a short but desperate struggle all the Christians were put to the sword. With the uprising of Shimabara and its bloody suppression by the government, the curtain falls on the early history of Christianity in Japan.

After this brief account of the history of Catholicism in Japan, we are able to give the full answer to the question: why did Catholicism fail?

There are two reasons for the failure: first, the very unfortunate connection of missionary activity with the political and commercial interests of the European powers; secondly, the impossibility on the part of Shinto, especially the Mikado cult, to syncretize with Catholicism.

For successful missionary work these two factors had to be eliminated. As a matter of fact, the first one disappeared when European governments and traders had become so secularized that they had absolutely no interest in religious missions. Thus Catholic missions were made to stand on their own merits, and though unaided by any powerful political supporters, it no longer has to fear opposition from the government arising from suspicion of foreign design of territorial acquisition.

How the second problem was handled, namely, accommodation to Catholicism, will be related in the next chapter.

4.
Catholicism and Modern Shinto

The period after the bloody Shimabara revolt is characterized by the apparent extirpation of Christianity, the strict seclusion of the country from all foreign intercourse except for a small Dutch trading colony on the island of Deshima, and new developments in Shinto itself.

The Beginning of Modern Shinto

The last item deserves our special attention because it is the beginning of a movement within Shinto, which came to be known as Modern Shinto. It was a thousand years after Kobo Daishi's successful amalgamation of Buddhism with Shinto and 500 years after Chicafusa's anti-Buddhist declaration, that a new school arose, known as "Fukko" or "Restoration of Antiquity," or the School of "pure" Shinto. Being centered in a passionate nationalism, it attempted to offset all foreign ideological infiltrations and to restore to the Japanese the Shinto of the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*.

The first important leader of this movement was Kada Azumaro (1667-1736). With the avowed purpose of arriving at the

original, or pure Shinto, he endeavored to eliminate all Buddhist elements by declaring them heretical. As it turned out, however, his ideas were more successfully carried out by Komo-no Mabuchi (1697-1769), Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), and Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843). These men viewed with horror the fact that the rule by the divine emperor had been brushed aside by the Shoguns during the 8th and 9th centuries. They charged this degradation of the Son of Heaven to Buddhist influence; wherefore they tried to eliminate it. They reasoned further, that the Japanese state, having been instituted by the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-Omikami, was superior to all foreign countries in the world. Finally, they attempted to prove their theses from the historical point of view by compiling the celebrated *Dai Nihongi,* or "Great History of Japan" in 240 volumes.

These notions came into full play at the beginning and middle of the 19th century, when the Japanese state made use of them as a weapon of almost unbelievable power.

Hidden Christian Communities

While these developments in Shinto took place, Christianity though apparently extinct, kept alive in remnants of Christian communities which lived scattered in the mountains. There, without priests, without sacraments except that of baptism, and without any contact with the Church outside Japan, they transmitted the Faith for two hundred and fifty years from generation to generation without any essential alteration. This stands unique in the history of the Catholic Church; and it is indeed the more remarkable because it happened in Japan, where everything foreign is ordinarily amalgamated and adapted to indigenous ideas.

On March 17, 1865 these Christian communities were rediscovered when they secretly revealed their existence to Monsignor Petitjean, chaplain of the French officers in Nagasaki. The monsignor then exercised the sacred ministry among them, but always during the night in order not to attract the attention of the Shogunate government. Nevertheless, in spite of all precautions the news of the rediscovery of the descendants of the ancient Christians reached Europe, was discussed in all the greater newspapers, was noticed by Japanese agents, and was

promptly reported to their home government. The result was a new enforcement of the edicts against Christianity, and persecution with all its horrors broke out again. But the Christians stood the test in a way worthy of their martyr ancestors of the 17th century, until under the pressure of circumstances, which will be discussed immediately, the Japanese government proclaimed freedom of religion in 1873, thereby ending its anti-Christian policy. From this rediscovery of the descendants of the ancient Christians dates the new era of Catholic missions in Japan.

Another feature of Japan's 19th century history which concerns us here is the enforced opening of the country to the outside world, together with the Restoration movement. It was about 1850-1860 that the ideas of the great Shinto scholars of the 18th century reached their full development in the rising nationalism, which achieved its great success in 1868, when medieval feudalism was abolished and full "divine" power restored to the emperor. Shinto now became stronger than it had ever been before.

Nationalistic Movement and the Opening of Japan

With the restoration in 1868 begins a new phase in the history of Shinto. Up to that date the ancient cult had been not more than a system or collective name for religiously colored national sentiments of the people. Now, however, it was made the spiritual nucleus, the inner force, of an intensive nationalistic movement employed by the rulers as the means for attaining their various nationalistic aims, as the following brief description of the development of modern Japan proves.

The bombardment of Shimonoseki in 1863 by British and American warships and the subsequent unequal treaty made the Japanese fully realize their precarious situation. In order to meet the danger of further political and military interference by the western Powers, the Japanese leaders concentrated their efforts on uniting the nation and thus making it strong against eventual foreign invasion.

It was in meeting this dangerous situation that Shinto played its first important role. Seeking to foster a united national psychology, the rulers looked for an ideology within the Japanese

nation to which everyone would willingly adhere, regardless of former political allegiance or religious attitude, and which thus would be a means for unification of country.

Ancient Shinto seemed to serve this purpose particularly well. It contained highly nationalistic elements, as for instance, the conviction of racial uniqueness. It possessed, as no other religious system in Japan, an indigenous ritual and an independent literature. At its core was ancestralism which centered in the belief of Japan's divine origin and the inalienable sovereignty rights of the Imperial family. Finally, Shinto alone was the religion of the soil, whereas Confucianism and Buddhism, together with Christianity were seen as importations. For these nationalistic reasons Shinto was indispensable for the unification of the country in face of strong but diversified and disintegrating tendencies.

East Against West

Unification and centralization of the government was certainly not enough to make Japan secure against foreign invasion; the country had to acquire the technique of the West and to be modernized. Therefore, Japan, opened her ports wide to the materialistic culture of Europe and America. By 1890 the influx of things western had become so strong as to endanger the cultural heritage, the very foundation of national life. Against this danger Shinto was to play its second important role.[12] In 1895, when Japan had defeated China and had regained her old self-assertiveness, the leaders began to employ elements of ancient Shinto as a means to check the extreme and indiscriminate adoption of things western. To lead the people back to the nation's own culture and old traditions, thus deepening the spirit of nationalism and effectively counteracting the spirit of westernization, the government prescribed the ancient ceremonial bow before the Shinto shrines to be performed by every citizen. Gradually this ceremony became the nucleus of all national celebrations public as well as private.

12. The most important document in this effort on the part of the government is the Imperial Rescript of 1890. It may rightfully be called the "Magna Charta" of modern Shinto. A translation of it is to be found in D. C. Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, Chicago, 1943, p. 77.

Under the pressure from the West, both in the political and cultural fields, the performance of the Shinto ceremony gained a very specific meaning as time went on. The new conceptions of democracy, individualism, liberalism, and even anarchism began to make themselves felt and to take even radical forms as, for instance, in 1911, when a socialist conspiracy attempted the assassination of the emperor and the overthrow of the government. This incident made the ruling classes realize the need for a stronger attachment of the people to the Imperial court and for a stronger concern of the individual for the national welfare. Accordingly, participation in Shinto ceremonies was strictly demanded as a testimony of patriotism and of loyalty to the emperor.

The Nature of Modern Shinto

In spite of this shift in the meaning of the Shinto celebrations from that of ancient times, religiously colored racial sentiments, to the modern one, public demonstration of one's loyalty to the emperor, Christians in general refused to participate. In order to understand the reason for their refusal, it will be necessary to study briefly the nature of modern Shinto, its ceremonies and festivals, in the light of Catholicism.

The central idea of modern Shinto was a full and unquestioned recognition of the emperor as the supreme and final authority in secular as well as religious matters. The first point, to obey the emperor as final authority in state and government affairs, did not create any difficulty; a good Catholic is also a good and loyal subject of the legitimate government. It was the second point, recognition of the emperor as final authority in matters of conscience, that aggravated the whole problem of adjustment between Catholicism and Shinto. Catholics, who regarded the Christian God as their last and final authority, could not give the same loyalty to some human being regardless of his official position. They could not be loyal to two supreme beings, that were opposed to each other, as was the case with the God-emperor of the Japanese and the spiritual God of Christianity. This was the basic issue between Catholicism and Shinto, all others were merely derivations of this fundamental problem.

The belief or acceptance of the emperor's divine authority on the part of ordinary Japanese was expressed by participating in the ceremonies at the Shinto shrines, which were established throughout the country. There were two types of shrines: the *Jinja* which were thought of as being the places in which the *kami* or Shinto deities in general took up residence when summoned by appropriate ceremonies, and the *Shokunsha* which were specifically erected in honor of the soldiers who had died for the country, and in which their spirits were supposed to be enshrined. These two institutions, the *Jinja* and *Shokunsha* were the holy places of modern Shinto where the *kami,* the spirits of great ancestors, particularly those of the Imperial family, of heroes, and of sages were supposedly to be found and communicated with.

Shinto Ceremonies and Rituals

More important for our study is the Shinto cult itself. After the ceremonial preparation, which consists of ritual cleansing and purifying of the grounds and buildings, hanging of the taboo rope, setting up flags and branches of the sacred tree, the celebration proper began with a procession. The doors of the Shinto sanctuary were formally opened by the chief functionary, and in many cases this was followed by a ritualistic prayer in which the deities and spirits, or *kami,* that were to receive the gifts and supplications were implored to draw near. Thereupon, food and drink offerings were presented. However, in the case of major festivals of large government or national shrines, special offerings were sent by the Imperial household. Then came the ritualistic addresses to the *kami,* read by the chief functionary of the shrine; they expressed desire for abundant crops, for a united and prosperous nation, for long and glorious Imperial reign, etc. After this, the individual participants passed to a position directly before the shrine and made obeisance in the form of a profound bow, thereby showing honor to the Imperial ancestors, paying due respect to the divine emperor, and expressing unconditional loyalty to him. This ceremonial bow was the significant part of the ceremony.

The ceremony ordinarily performed by the common people was somewhat different, indeed very simple. In entering the precinct of the shrine, the visitor removed his hat, purified his hands, moved up the steps and made a profound bow. Some Japanese who went privately to the shrine to perform this ceremony clapped their hands as a sign of admiration and invocation of the deities. Students who went in groups usually did not perform the ritual purification nor clap their hands, but at the command of their leader they simply made a profound bow. The meaning of this was the same as that of the official state ceremony, namely, belief in and acceptance of the divine authority of the emperor, together with whatever was implied in such belief and submission.

The special occasions for these ritualistic performances were the great Shinto feast days, as, for instance, February 11, the feast of the Foundation of the Japanese empire by the first emperor Jimmu Tenno; March 21, and September 23, the equinoxes, the feasts in honor of the Imperial ancestors; April 3, the anniversary of the death of Jimmu Tenno. There are thirteen major and eight minor Shinto feasts that are celebrated with national Shinto ceremonies.

Position of Christians

This brief explanation shows why Catholics refused to be present at the Shinto ceremonies, for they amounted to an open profession of the emperor's divine and supreme authority in their lives; in other words, participation in Shinto ceremonies would be a public acknowledgement that the emperor held a position in their lives like that which the Christian God holds in the heart of a Christian—it would mean loyalty to two supreme beings, a position impossible for a Catholic.

These specific elements in Shinto, belief in the divinity of the emperor, in the reality of the Shinto gods and spirits, and in the divine origin and inherent sacredness of the country, had to be removed to make it possible for a Catholic to participate in the ceremonies. In other words, a way had to be found, or a status of Shinto had to be established which might make it possible for

a Christian publicly to demonstrate his loyalty to the Imperial Throne and to the country like his non-Christian fellow citizens, but without thereby acknowledging the specific religious elements of Shinto. Such a possibility was provided by the establishment of State Shinto.

Like the revocation of the prohibitions against Christianity in 1873, the establishment of State Shinto was rather an act of expediency and necessity. When the Japanese authorities tried to enforce their Shinto ideology upon their subjects for the unification of the country, they faced a great problem. For, not only Christians in general, but also Buddhists and modern atheists, especially returned students from Europe and America, refused to believe in the traditional Shinto ideas. This situation forced the authorities to make arrangements for a modified type of Shinto which would be acceptable to all the diversified groups in Japan. Nagao Ariga, a Japanese scholar, has given the following interesting interpretation of the reasons which led to the establishment of State Shinto:

> . . . In the case of a civilized country there must exist freedom of faith. If Shinto is a religion, however, the acceptance or refusal thereof must be left to personal choice. Yet for a Japanese subject to refuse to honor the ancestors of the emperor is disloyal. Indeed, a Japanese out of his duty as subject must honor the ancestors of the emperor. This cannot be a matter of choice. It is a duty. Therefore, this cannot be regarded as a religion. It is a ritual. It is the ceremony of gratitude to ancestors. In this respect the government protects the shrines and does not expound doctrines. On the other hand, since it is possible to establish doctrines with regard to the (Shinto) deities, it is necessary to permit freedom of belief in Shinto considered as religion. Hence there has arisen the necessity of making a distinction between Shinto regarded as the functioning of a national ritual (State Shinto) and that Shinto which proclaims doctrines as a religion. (The various sects of Shinto).[13]

13. Translated by D. C. Holtom, in: *The National Faith of Japan.* London, 1938, pp. 69-70.

A preliminary step in this policy was taken in March, 1874, when the edicts of persecution against Christianity were revoked. Fifteen years later, in 1899, the Constitution was promulgated which in Article 28 grants full religious liberty to all Japanese subjects. With these two acts the way was slowly prepared for the acceptance of a State Shinto by all citizens regardless of religious affiliations. What still remained to be done was to free this new form of Shinto from all its numerous superstitious elements, and then to establish its non-religious status for political and nationalistic purposes. The important action taken to this end was the official separation of the new State Shinto from all other Shinto organizations. It was put into effect by state law in 1882 and reaffirmed by the government in 1884.

Jinja and Kyo-kai

This act of legal separation had great consequences. First, all institutions of State Shinto were to be called *Jinja* in contradistinction to those of the various Shinto sects, which were to be designated *Kyo-kai* or Churches. Furthermore, all Shinto bodies classified under the second group were separated from direct relationship to the state; they had to depend entirely on private initiative for organization and support. The main point of difference, however, between these two groups of Shinto is that the various sects carry on definite religious propaganda, employ religious teachers, maintain churches, and conduct services in which appear such elements as exhortation and instruction, prayer and adoration. State Shinto, on the other hand, confines itself to the celebration of such ceremonies as it considers appropriate for fostering nationalistic aims. It has no creed of its own. No doctrinal subscription of any kind is required from individual visitors to the State shrines. Finally, the question of private beliefs of the participants in the ceremonies was not to be raised. The belief might be one of sincere faith in the realities of the spirits, or merely reverence for national institutions, accompanied by an atheistic conception of the gods themselves. The government did not expect the individual to make any expression

of personal faith beyond the mere act of participation as a pledge of loyalty.

Despite these new arrangements by the government, Christians refused to take part in State Shinto ceremonies, mainly on the ground that these ceremonies were still too closely associated with original Shinto conceptions, as for instance, the pantheistic or polytheistic character of the *kami,* the ritualistic addresses or prayers to the Shinto deities, and especially belief in the divinity of the emperor. Thus, Catholics considered themselves the victims of deceitful conduct on the part of the government, which on the one hand asserted that State Shinto ceremonies were no religious acts at all but merely a public demonstration of loyalty, and yet, on the other hand, officially, offered sacrifices and prayers to the spirits and deities of Shinto.

The refusal of the Christians to comply with the orders of the government in regard to Shinto ceremonies led to grave hostilities, which increased during the decades of 1910-1930, and which, in 1932, resulted in a violent crisis, when students of the Sophia University in Tokyo stayed away from Shinto rites on the grounds of conscientious objections. The Church, though small in numbers, was once more threatened with extermination, unless some kind of adjustment with Shinto could be worked out.

The Catholic Church on State Shinto

In this crisis the authorities of the Catholic Church in Japan made renewed studies of the whole problem of adjustment between Shinto and Catholicism. They came to the conclusion that while modern State Shinto rituals are obviously remnants of the ancient *kami* cult and as such still have a number of religious features, the religious elements, however, have undergone a definite change in so far as their interpretation by state authorities and by public opinion is concerned; therefore, participation in Shinto ceremonies no longer necessarily means a public demonstration of one's belief in the ancient deities and spirits but is today rather an expression of patriotic sentiments in compliance with the demands of the government. A deciding reason for such judgment consisted in this that those who re-

fused to be present at the Shinto celebrations were accused of indifference and disloyalty towards their fatherland, but not of unbelief in the national gods. Thus the Church was justified in taking a new attitude.

Following these findings of specialists in the field of Shinto research, the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith on May 25, 1936 issued instructions to the Catholics of Japan allowing the official definition of the non-religious nature of State Shinto and tolerating henceforth the national Shinto celebrations. This document, in justifying the action, recalled that the purely civil character of the Shinto celebrations was vouched for not just by a change in popular opinion but also by official declaration. In its final section the proclamation reads as follows:

> The Ordinaries in the territories of the Japanese empire shall instruct the faithful that, to the ceremonies which are held at the *Jinja,* administered civilly by the government, there is attributed by the civil authorities and by common estimation of cultured persons a mere signification of patriotism, namely, a meaning of filial reverence towards the Imperial family and to the heroes of the country; therefore, since ceremonies of this kind are endowed with a purely civil value, it is lawful for Catholics to join in them and to act in accord with the other citizens after having made known their intentions, if this be necessary for the removal of any false interpretation of their acts. . . .[14]

With this instruction to the Catholics of Japan, Rome aided the spread of the Faith in Eastern Asia. It is quite natural to raise the question: did not Rome surrender to native Shinto by making this arrangement just as Confucianism and Buddhism did in the days of Kobo Daishi? Some Japonologists, as for instance, Professor D. C. Holtom, the greatest Shinto scholar of the West, has answered this question in the affirmative.[15] What does Rome say?

14. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis,* 1936 (28), pp. 406-409.
15. D. C. Holtom, *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism,* pp. 95-96.

In its official declaration, Rome justifies its action by pointing out that the meaning of Shinto in recent decades has changed from that of religiously colored racial sentiments to a mere civil ceremony for the demonstration of loyalty and patriotism. Furthermore, Rome finds that the government is not interested in having the Japanese subjects show faith in the reality of the Shinto gods and accepting the Shintó myths, but in ordering all citizens to participate in the ceremonies the government is solely interested in securing the loyalty of its subjects. This it tries to achieve by prescribing a certain custom of ancient Shinto, to be performed before the shrines, which still has the same form as in olden times, while its meaning has been changed.

The position of Rome is strengthened by the fact that modern intellectuals and atheists take part in the ceremonies and yet professedly do not believe in Shinto; they rather participate in compliance with an order of the government, and to demonstrate their loyalty. There is no reason to assume that Catholics should not be able to do the same.

Thus we have here a case of accommodation or adjustment that is entirely different from that of Confucianism and Buddhism in the days of Kobo Daishi. Both of these merged into Shinto ideology to such an extent that they became something entirely different, something that neither Confucius nor Buddha would have recognized as their teaching. Catholicism adapts itself to indigenous forms of religion and sentiments of the people; but in doing so it ever remains distinct, it does not lose its identity.

5.
Latest Developments

The years after the settlement of the Shinto problem in 1936 are notable for three events: first, the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the Japanese government; second, the surrender of Japan to the American forces in 1945; third, the constructive policy of General MacArthur. All

these items have a great bearing on the status of Catholicism and Shinto.

Ever since the settlement of the Shinto problem in 1936, the Japanese government has been working out a codification of laws on religion. The *Code of Laws on Religion* was completed and published in 1941. In it Catholicism is listed as one of the officially recognized religions in Japan. Immediately after its publication, the government appointed Mr. Ken Harada as its representative to the Vatican, who was to be an envoy extraordinary in unilateral relations without a corresponding Vatican representative in Tokyo. Though this action had no direct effect on the relations between Catholicism and Shinto, it did place all dealings of the government in regard to Catholics on a diplomatic basis, and thus raised its status in the eyes of the Japanese public.

Results of the Japanese Surrender

The second item of importance for our study is the surrender of Japan to the American forces in 1945. It rendered void the dogma of Shinto that Japan being the abode of protecting gods and spirits could never be successfully invaded by any foreign army. But this event was merely the prelude to one of much greater significance, namely, the disclaim of divinity by Emperor Hirohito. In his New Year's Rescript of January 1, 1946, the emperor publicly repudiated the "false impression that the emperor is divine," and denied "that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world." [16] Since these "dogmas" of Shinto were kept alive through Shinto orientated teaching of history, the outlook of the people on their past had quite naturally to be reviewed and corrected, putting the tales about Izanagi and Izanami, about the Sun Goddess and her command to her grandson Jimmu Tenno to conquer and rule the world, in the category in which they belong, namely, folklore and legend, but not actual history.

The third item affecting the relations between Catholicism and modern Shinto is the constructive policy of General Douglas

16. The New Year's Rescript of Emperor Hirohito is to be found in the editorial of the New York *Times*, Jan. 1st, 1946.

MacArthur. On December 15, 1945, General MacArthur issued his sweeping directive which forbade all further governmental support of the State Shinto system, ranging from minutely prescribed patriotic ceremonies to religious worship of the emperor. Before drafting the directive, the Religious Division of General MacArthur's headquarters consulted Christians and non-Christians, both Japanese and foreign. Without demur, the Imperial Japanese government issued the decree, bringing the full impact of the General's directive before the people. More significant than the order itself is the total absence, thus far, of any popular protest or demonstration by Shinto devotees against the directive, though it is still too soon to state that there is no hidden resentment stirring beneath the surface. Nevertheless, the lack of public objection is remarkable in the history of nationwide religious changes. State Shinto, so far, shows no signs of having martyrs, and it seems to be certain that the changes at present taking place in Japan will have a profound effect on the future status of Catholicism as well as of Shinto.

The present status of the Catholic Church in Japan is marked by the tremendous losses which she has suffered in personnel and material through the war. Generally speaking, the situation is such that anyone less optimistic than missionaries would be discouraged by the losses and destruction. But in spite of the sad conditions, hope and enthusiasm are sweeping the ranks of our missionaries and the Catholic laity, for they see the Japanese people seeking as never before in modern times spiritual certainty, and thanks to the wise policies of General Douglas MacArthur they see the Church free as never before to offer that certainty.

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Professor D. C. Holtom has been a resident of Japan for thirty years as Baptist missionary and teacher of modern languages. He has made extensive studies of modern Shinto and has long been recognized as the foremost non-Japanese authority on Shinto.

Anonym. "Hirohito Disclaims Divinity." *New York Times,* Jan. 1, 1946. This issue of *N. Y. Times* has the full text of the Imperial rescript of his denial of his divinity.

Study Outline

Gerald C. Treacy, S.J.

PART 1. PAGES 1-13

Nature worship and clan sentiment are the two factors from which the early religious concepts of the Japanese developed. Clan sentiment found its clearest expression in the veneration of clan ancestors. Then ancestors became local or national deities. Later Shinto or the way of the gods developed.

The early Japanese gods had qualities of good and evil. Ancestor worship occupied the more prominent part in primitive Japanese religion. The fourth century A.D. marks the beginning of the "divine" emperors. In the eighth century Chinese-trained historians wrote the history of Japan. It was mainly myth and legend. The important part of the book was the statement that the Japanese ruler was the Sun Goddess incarnate.

Chinese culture strongly influenced Japan at this time. It brought Confucianism and Buddhism to the islands. Confucianism blending with Shinto served to strengthen the divine authority of the emperor. Buddhism also blended with Shinto. In Japan it became "this-wordly". Catholicism on the other hand could not blend with Shinto and that explains its slow progress in Japan.

When Francis Xavier entered Japan in the sixteenth century he found the government decentralized, exercised by a feudal aristocracy. The emperor was powerless and in seclusion at Kyoto. Civil war was rampant. Buddhism was greatly secularized, and Shinto though modified by Buddhism was still a living force to be reckoned with. It was an opportune time for missionary effort.

QUESTIONS

What were the primitive religious ideas of the Japanese?
What two factors entered into their early religious concepts?
Explain the origin and meaning of Shinto.

What was meant by the Japanese gods before Chinese culture entered Japan?
Explain the origin and development of ancestor worship.
What are the essential ideas of KOJIKI and NIHONGI?
What influence do these two books show?
What two elements of Chinese culture especially influenced Japan?
How did the Japanese adapt the teaching of filial piety to their social life?
Describe the Japanese scene as witnessed by Francis Xavier.

PART 2. PAGES 14-27

Xavier's plan was to win over the central government. In this he was unsuccessful but he did win over two feudal lords. It was a good start for Catholicism in Japan. In ten years there were 150,000 converts and eighty Jesuit missionaries working in twenty stations. The ruler Nobunaga was a friend to the missionaries. But toward the end of his reign he was hostile. There were many reasons for this; the main one was the belief that the missions were an opening wedge for the European conquest of the country. Antagonism from the Buddhist priesthood also contributed to the changing attitude of Nobunaga.

His successor Taikosama was friendly too in the beginning of his rule. But in 1537 he issued an edict ordering all Catholic missionaries to leave the country and prohibiting the practice of the Catholic Religion. To this tyrant Catholicism appeared loyal to a foreign power. Portuguese merchants were allowed to continue their trade. Soon this was to cease.

In 1597 at Nagasaki twenty-six missionaries and converts were martyred. This was the beginning of a long series of persecutions. In 1602 peace came to the Japanese mission and continued for some time. In 1611 the Dutch and English traders entered Japan and did everything to prejudice the Japanese rulers against the Spanish and Portuguese missionaries and merchants.

In 1614 an edict was published against the missionaries and their converts. Christianity was proscribed because it opposed

Shinto and Buddhism and was a tool for Spanish and Portuguese conquest. Persecution followed in fullest fury. An uprising of 30,000 Christians who took their stand in the fortified castle of Shimabara was cruelly crushed, every Christian perishing. With this tragic event the curtain fell on the early history of Christianity in Japan.

QUESTIONS

What was Xavier's tactic on entering Japan?
What progress did the Japanese mission make from 1571 to 1582?
Why did Nobunaga favor the Japanese mission?
Why did he change his attitude toward the Christians?
Why was Catholicism regarded as an "evil religion"?
Why did Nobunaga continue to favor the Japanese mission externally?
What reasons were given for hostility to Catholicism in the edict of 1587?
Why was Catholicism declared to be "contrary to the law of Japan"?
Why did rivalry develop among the different Orders in Japan?
Cite two reasons for the failure of Christianity in Japan.

PART 3. PAGES 27-34

In the middle of the seventeenth century the new school of Shinto arose. It aimed at getting rid of Buddhist influence. It argued that as the Japanese were descendants of the Sun Goddess, they were superior to all other peoples. In the nineteenth century the Japanese government made use of these theories as a weapon of almost unbelievable power.

While these developments of Shinto were taking place, Christianity survived. Without priests, without Sacraments excepting Baptism, Catholicism survived for two hundred and fifty years. On March 17th, 1865, Christian communities were found by Monsignor Petitjean. In 1873 religious freedom was proclaimed by the Japanese government and a new era of Catholic missions began.

Shinto during this century became stronger than it ever was before. It fostered a national psychology. It united all classes against the foreigner. Participation in Shinto ceremonies was proof of loyalty to nation and emperor. This loyalty called for the admission of the divinity of the emperor. No Catholic could give it. Nor could Catholics participate in Shinto ceremonies. To meet Catholic, Buddhist and atheistic opposition to Shinto as a religion, State Shinto was introduced. The new State Shinto was separated from all other Shinto organizations. The government asked from individuals no expression of personal faith, but insisted that all should participate in Shinto ceremonies as an act of patriotism.

QUESTIONS

What was the aim of modern Shinto?
What teaching was contained in the "Great History of Japan"?
What was remarkable about Catholicism's survival in Japan?
When did the Japanese anti-Christian policy end?
How did the Japanese government make use of modern Shinto?
What does ancestralism mean?
What is the significance of the bow before the Shinto shrines?
Why was participation in Shinto ceremonies demanded by the government?
Why did Catholics refuse to participate?
How did State Shinto differ from other forms of Shinto?

PART 4. PAGES 34-40

Catholics at first would have nothing to do with Shinto celebrations. But in 1936 after prolonged research, a decree of Propaganda allowed participation to Catholics, as modern Shinto had a patriotic and not a religious significance. Here we have an instance of accommodation.

The years following 1936 have been notable for three features; the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Japan, the defeat of Japan by America, and the constructive policy of General MacArthur. While the Church

in Japan has bled and suffered during the war, the outlook today for the cause of Christ is better than at any previous period of Japanese history.

QUESTIONS

What was the effect of Christian refusal to participate in Shinto?
After prolonged study of Shinto what conclusion was reached by Propaganda?
What was the result of Propaganda's decree?
Was not this decree a surrender of Catholicism to Shinto?
How is Catholic accommodation different from Buddhist adoption of Shinto?
The years after the settlement of the Shinto problem are notable for what?
What was the effect of the appointment of a Japanese representative at the Vatican?
How did the American victory affect the teachings of Shinto?
How has General MacArthur's policy affected Shinto?
What are the prospects for the Church in Japan today?

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

The Reverend Angelus Aschoff is a member of the Order of Friars Minor, belonging to the Province Saxonia de Sancta Cruce (Germany). After his ordination in 1939, he was sent by his superior to Shantung, China, the mission field which has been entrusted to that particular Franciscan province for the last forty years. Since he had taken the route to China by way of the United States, his superior ordered him, shortly after his arrival in this country, to remain and study Sinology and Japonology at Columbia University, in New York City. In 1943 he received from this University the M.A. degree in Chinese. The following year he joined the American Oriental Society and has been a member of that organization ever since. At present he is working on his doctoral dissertation, which he hopes to finish by the end of this year. As soon as he will have finished his studies, he will leave the United States for the mission in China.

The study outline and questions for "Catholicism and Shinto in Japan" were formulated by Gerald C. Treacy, S.J., who has prepared study club editions of various encyclicals.

The authors of the various studies of the Missionary Academia express their own views, which are necessarily independent of the National Council of The Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

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